

REMARKS

This is in response to the non-final Official Action currently outstanding with regard to the above-identified application.

Claims 1-15 were pending in this application at the time of the issuance of the currently outstanding Official Action. By the foregoing Amendment, Claims 1- 15 have been amended. No claims have been added, canceled or withdrawn. Accordingly, upon the entry of the foregoing amendment, Claims 1- 15 as hereinabove amended will constitute the Claims under active prosecution in this application.

More particularly, in the currently outstanding non-final Official Action the Examiner has:

1. Acknowledged Applicants' claim for foreign priority under 35 USC §119 (a)-(d) or (f), and confirmed the receipt of the required copies of the priority documents by the United States Patent and Trademark Office;
2. Accepted the drawings as filed on 17 February 2004;
3. Acknowledged Applicant's Information Disclosure Statement by providing the Applicant with a copy of the Form PTO-1449 that accompanied that Statement duly signed, dated and initialed by the Examiner in confirmation of the consideration of the art cited therein;
4. Provided Applicant with a Notice of References Cited (Form PTO-892) and a copy of the cited Japanese reference;
5. Rejected claims 1, 2, 3, 8 and 14 under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by JP 2003-128838 A.

6. Rejected claims 9, 10 and 15 under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Kuzuka, et al (US Patent No. 4,640,604.
7. Objected to Claims 4-7 and 11-13 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated that those claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of their respective base claims and any intervening claims.

No further comment regarding items 1-4 above is deemed to be required in these Remarks.

With respect to item 7, Applicants by the foregoing Amendment have presented Claims 4 and 11 respectively in independent form including all of the limitations of the respective claims from which each depends. Claims 5-7 depend directly or indirectly from Claim 4, and Claims 12-13 depend directly or indirectly from Claim 11. Accordingly, by the foregoing Amendment, Claims 4-7 and 11-13 have been presented in a form including all of the limitations of their respective base claim and any intervening claims. Since this Amendment removes the bases for the Examiner's objections to Claims 4-7 and 11-13, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of Claims 4-7 and 11-13 in response to this communication.

With regard to item 5 above, each of Claims 1, 2, 3, 8 and 14 now have been directly or indirectly amended in a manner indicating that the sheet conveying apparatus claimed includes a manual feed unit. In this regard, it is to be noted that the sheet guide described in JP-03128838A is provided near an outer wall of an image forming apparatus so as to bend a sheet feeding path, the sheet guide in that case being located downstream of a converging sheet feeding path into which the sheet feeding paths disclosed in the reference converge. Specifically, the sheet feeding paths of the reference come from a plurality of cassette installation parts that respectively include sheet feeding means 3.

More particularly, the sheet guide of the Japanese reference is in the form of a unit such that the sheet guide can be inserted into and withdrawn from the image forming apparatus disclosed. Further, the sheet guide is provided downstream of a sheet conveying path with respect to each of the cassette installation parts. Hence, Applicants respectfully submit that the manual feed unit according to the amended claims of the present application is completely different from the cited Japanese reference.

The cited Japanese reference (JP 03128838A) neither describes nor suggests anything about a manual feed unit comprising (i) a feed tray, (ii) a pair of conveying rollers for sandwiching a sheet and conveying the sheet in a predetermined direction, and (iii) a supporting body for supporting the pair of conveying rollers, wherein the manual feed unit conveys a sheet placed on the feed tray via a conveying path through which the sheet is conveyed by the pair of conveying rollers, much less about the supporting body including (a) a first unit having one of a pair of conveying rollers and (b) a second unit having the other of the pair of conveying rollers wherein the first unit and the second unit are separable from one another.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the manual feed unit now claimed is neither anticipated by, nor rendered obvious by, JP 03128838A. Consequently, reconsideration and allowance of Claims 1, 2, 3, 8 and 14 in response to this communication is respectfully requested.

Finally, with regard to item 7 above, it is to be noted that the sheet conveying apparatus as claimed in Claims 9, 10 and 15 hereinabove includes two conveying paths (i.e., the conveying path in which the first pair of conveying rollers are provided and the conveying path in which the second pair of conveying rollers are provided. The foregoing amendment clarifies this point.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that even in the sheet conveying apparatus having the two conveying paths just mentioned, when the third unit and the fourth unit are separated from one another, a large space is created where the third unit previously existed such that the second conveying path and a part in which the second conveying path meets the first conveying path is opened. However, the Kuzuka et al reference neither describes, nor suggests, anything about a sheet conveying apparatus including two conveying paths as herein claimed.

Furthermore, Applicants respectfully call attention to the fact that the rejected claims call for the third unit to carry the first pair of rollers and one of the second pair of rollers while the fourth body is to carry the other of the second pair of rollers. This can only be the case if one considers the casing 19 and the body 23 of the Kazuka et al reference to together constitute the third body claimed and the upper casing 23 of the Kazuka et al reference to constitute the fourth body claimed. Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner has stretched the terminology of the present claims beyond their absolute limit in this rejection.

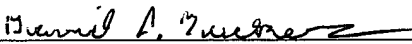
The Kuzuka et al reference clearly depicts and describes the casing 19 as being separate from the body 23. Further, it is not possible to separate the casing 24 from the body 23 until the casing 19 has been separated from the body 23. Accordingly, contrary to the present invention, the first pair of rollers must be separated from the second pair of rollers prior to the rollers of the second pair being separated from each other. Hence, Applicants respectfully submit that in the Kuzuka et al reference the first roller pair and one of the second roller pair are **not** mounted on the same unit as herein claimed.

For each and all of the foregoing reasons, therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner's currently outstanding rejections either are totally insufficient or have been overcome by the foregoing Amendment. Further, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the Claims currently under active prosecution in this application are now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance of Claims 1-15, as hereinabove presented, in response to this communication are respectfully requested.

Applicants also believe that additional fees beyond those submitted herewith are not required in connection with the consideration of this response to the currently outstanding Official Action. However, if for any reason a fee is required, a fee paid is inadequate or credit is owed for any excess fee paid, you are hereby authorized and requested to charge and/or credit Deposit Account No. 04-1105, as necessary, for the correct payment of all fees which may be due in connection with the filing and consideration of this communication.

Respectfully submitted,

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SIGNATURE OF PRACTITIONER

Reg. No.: 27,840

David A. Tucker
(type or print name of practitioner)
Attorney for Applicant(s)

Tel. No. (617) 517-5508

Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge, LLP
P.O. Box 55874
P.O. Address

Customer No.: 21874

Boston, MA 02205